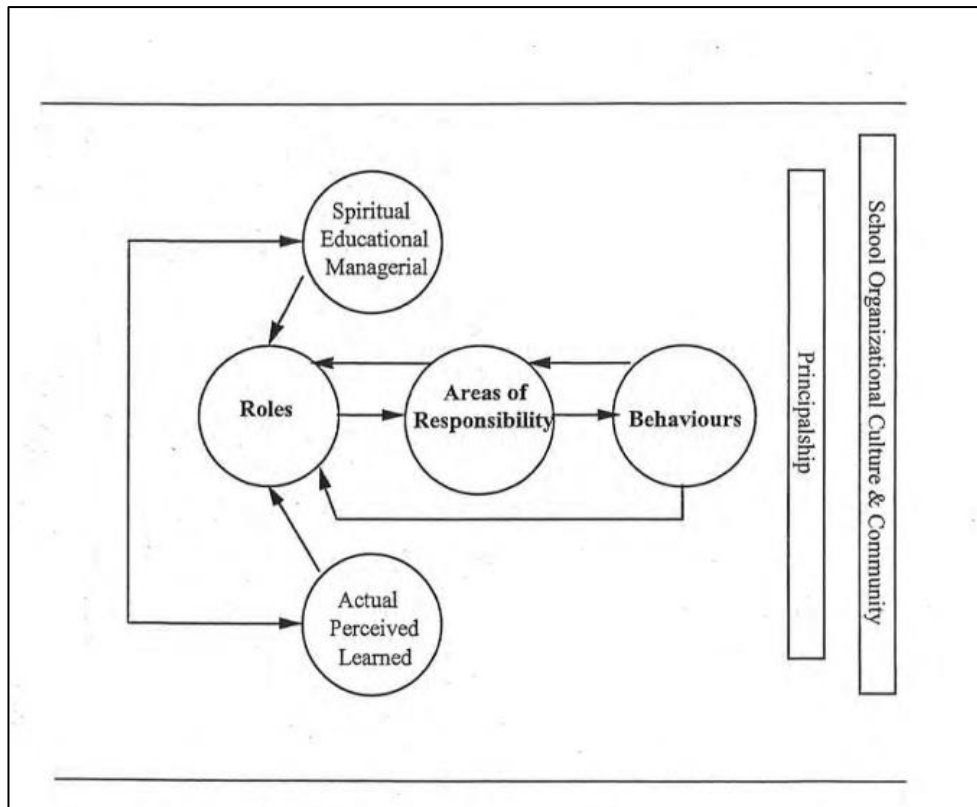


Religious School Principals' Social Systems Model

Ian D. Gordon



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This model depicts how religious school principals' roles, responsibilities, and behaviours are interconnected. Religious / Christian private school principals are found to engage in actual, perceived, and learned roles as spiritual, educational, and managerial leaders. These roles are shaped within school organizational, cultural, community, educational, and principalship spheres of influence.

This model is part of a larger body of research documented in the following MEd thesis project.

Gordon, Ian D. (2004). *Role definition of principals in religious Schools*. St. Catharines, ON: Brock University MEd Project.

<https://archive.org/details/role-definition-of-principals-in-religious-schools>

Gordon, Ian D. (2004). *Role definition of principals in religious Schools*. St. Catharines, ON: Brock University MEd Project.

Abstract:

Principals of private religious schools are required to exercise professional and spiritual leadership when facing a complex array of problems on a daily basis. This research study examined the relationships of role description, role complexity or ambiguity, responsibilities, and subsequent behaviours among Christian elementary school principals.

Participants examined the actual roles of principals as spiritual, managerial, and educational school leaders as defined in the literature by Ciriello (1998). The intent of this study was to demonstrate the importance of religious school principals in their school organization and wider school community.

This was an exploratory mixed-method qualitative study that used a survey and a series of in-depth interviews. The survey instrument employed closed- and open-ended questions on what issues principals perceived as important, satisfying, difficult, and time-consuming. Profiles were developed for 10 Niagara Christian school principals and their institutions. Three Christian school educators were invited to comment on survey findings using a series of semi structured questions. Common themes that emerged from the survey and interview data were identified.

This study provided rich and descriptive accounts of principals' roles as exemplary school leaders. Varying degrees of role complexity or a lack of principals' role congruence were noted in all job components although principals held that their roles were balanced, satisfying, and rewarding. The spiritual dimensions of principals' primary responsibilities permeated all other roles and competencies. It was shown that religious school principals projected important images as role models, school, and community leaders. Principals' interstitial roles were further described using the metaphors of principals as shepherds, servant leaders, and visionaries.

This study concluded with the introduction of a Religious School Principals' Social Systems Model. This model depicts how principals' roles are connected to different role-related elements. It is hoped that this study will add to the limited body of research on the religious school movement, principals, and wider school culture. An extensive literature review of Christian elementary school principals was developed for the benefit of future research.